(b) whether it is a fact that a substantial quality of steel is also lying with the steel plant; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to dispose of these stocks?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. About 1 million tone stocks are lying at stockyards and plants at Bokaro, Rourkela, Bhilai and Durgapur put together.

Details of stocks, as on 01.11.1996, are as under:—

(000 T)

	01.11.1996
Stocks at Plants	189.4
Stocks at Stockyards	810.1
Total Stocks	999.5

Measures taken to dispose of these stocks include vigorous customer contact and follow-up of individual customer orders for affecting speedier delivery, orienting product mix to suit market needs and adjusting production as per market requirements, arranging stock transfer from one branch to another to meet requirements of various customers, adopting strategic pricing depending upon market segment, competition and quantity linked bulk purchases, maximising exports of some categories to bring down the stock levels, etc.

Elimination of child labour in India

1075. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have an estimate of the number of child labourers in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to eliminate child labour by 2000 A.D.; and

(d) if so, in what manner this target would be realised?

*THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) and (b) According to 1981 census, the total number of working children in India was 13.6 million. As per the 43rd round of National Sample Survey conducted in 1987-88, the total number of working children increased to 17.02 million. It is estimated that presently there would be around 20 million working children in the country. Out of this, around two million children are estimated to be working in hazardous occupations.

(c) and (d) The Common Minimum Programme (CMP) announced by the government seeks to eliminate child labour from all occupations and industries and make free and compulsory elementary education a fundamental right. To begin with, Government is engaged in the task of rehabilitation of about two million children working hazardous occupations. Under the programme, the children working in hazardous occupations are rehabilitated by putting them in special schools where they are provided with non-formal education, vocational training, stipend, nutrition and health check. So far, 76 child labour projects have been sanctioned for rehabilitation of around 1.5 lakh children.

Procurement of wheat on a staggered basis

1076. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether a decision on the question of procuring wheat on a 'staggered' basis has been taken;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, by when the decision is expected to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (c) With a view to easing pressure on storage space, due to high levels of procurement of foodgrains for the Central Pool, particularly during the period of 1993-96 Rabi seasons for wheat and 1993-94 and 1994-95 kharif seasons for paddy/rice a suggestion was made for procurement of foodgrains in a staggered manner with graduated price structure. Subsequently procurement of wheat during 1996-97 Rabi marketing season has come down to 81.82 lakh